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*The Pacific environment, sustaining our livelihoods and natural heritage*

## Twenty Sixth SPREP Meeting of Officials

Apia, Samoa  
22<sup>nd</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> September 2015

### **Agenda Item 10.4.3: Regional EIA Guidelines, “Strengthening Environmental Impact Assessment: Guidelines for Pacific Island Countries and Territories”**

#### **Purpose**

1. To seek endorsement of:
  - the Regional EIA Guidelines, “Strengthening Environmental Impact Assessment: Guidelines for Pacific Island Countries and Territories” (annex 1); and
  - use of the Regional EIA Guidelines to develop an EIA training package for national capacity-building.

#### **Background**

2. The Regional EIA Guidelines deliver on the SPREP Strategic Plan target EMG 1.1: *to develop Pacific-related models for environmental assessment*, and complement the first regional EIA Guidelines published in 1993. The Regional EIA Guidelines aim to assist implementation of current EIA legal requirements but also to promote best practice in EIA across the full range of projects and economic development sectors in the Pacific.
3. The Guidelines are primarily targeted at in-country EIA practitioners, particularly government officers responsible for administering EIA, but also government officers working outside of the environment ministry/department who engage with the EIA process in a regulatory or development proponent capacity (e.g. officers working in areas such as planning, health, energy, water, transport, fisheries, agriculture and natural resources).
4. The Regional EIA Guidelines are the result of an extensive 3 year consultation and drafting process which included:
  - a. determining needs through national capacity self assessments, lessons learnt through EIA technical assistance provided to members and member country surveys;
  - b. collaboration with regional and national experts to produce a first draft;
  - c. internal review of the first draft by SPREP Divisions and production of a second draft;
  - d. validation of the second draft in 3 pilot countries through national training workshops;
  - e. production of a third draft for peer review within SPREP and by partner agencies; and
  - f. consolidation of peer review feedback and circulation of the final draft to SPREP focal points for comment.

## Overview of Regional EIA Guidelines

5. The Regional EIA Guidelines consist of:
  - a. an overview of the EIA process;
  - b. an EIA toolkit that includes templates and checklists for EIA screening, scoping and review;
  - c. an introduction to strategic environmental assessment (SEA), an approach that provides context for EIA; and
  - d. recommendations for achieving best practice.
6. The Regional EIA Guidelines also:
  - a. emphasise the importance of assessing *both* the potential impacts of development on the environment and the potential impacts of the environment on development, including impacts related to climate change and natural disasters;
  - b. link the EIA process to obligations under relevant Multilateral Environmental Agreements; and
  - c. provide guidance to countries should they wish to develop their own EIA guidelines.

## Next steps

7. The Regional EIA Guidelines are a tool developed as part of SPREP's broader EIA capacity-building work in the Pacific; they are not an end in themselves. Following the endorsement of the Guidelines SPREP will develop an EIA training package that can be delivered across the region.
8. The Regional EIA Guidelines provide the framework for developing supplementary guidelines for specific development types and sectors (e.g. coastal tourism, agriculture, logging, public infrastructure, energy, water and mining).
9. This work will be carried out through implementation of the current ACP-MEAs Capacity Building Project and is integrated within the EMG Division's work programme and budget.
10. SPREP is engaged with the Pacific Region Infrastructure Facility (PRIF),<sup>1</sup> which is currently developing harmonised environmental and social safeguard (ESS) tools and methods for both donors and countries to use when developing infrastructure investment projects across the Pacific. It is anticipated the tools and methods will be used by PRIF partners for conducting environmental safeguard and management of infrastructure development in the Pacific. SPREP will reference the Regional EIA Guidelines when collaborating with PRIF as a useful input to the development of harmonised ESS tools and methods.

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<sup>1</sup> The Pacific Region Infrastructure Facility (PRIF) is a multi-agency coordination mechanism aimed at improving the delivery of development assistance from donors and development partners to the infrastructure sector in the Pacific region. PRIF supports infrastructure development and maintenance in Pacific Island Countries (PICs) through investment coordination, research and technical assistance. PRIF was initiated in 2008 by the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (NZMFAT), and the World Bank Group (WBG), including the International Finance Corporation (IFC). The European Commission (EC) and the European Investment Bank (EIB) became members in 2010, and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) in 2013. PRIF member agencies have recorded over 400 completed, current and pipeline infrastructure projects in the PRIF project database from 2009 to 2017, to the value of approximately USD \$3.4 billion.

## Recommendation

11. The Meeting is invited to:

- **endorse** the new Regional EIA Guidelines, "*Strengthening Environmental Impact Assessment: Guidelines for Pacific Island Countries and Territories*";
- **endorse** the use of the Regional EIA Guidelines to develop an EIA training package for national capacity-building and supplementary guidelines; and
- **note** the collaboration with PRIF on ESS safeguards.

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30 June 2015